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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the concept of 'respect' as a critical component in maintaining effective working alliances among members of counseling and counseling psychology training environments. Current literature describes effective professional relationships with respect to dual relationships, faculty ethical behavior toward students, and professionals' ethical behavior toward clients. Literature addressing respectful behaviors between faculty, of students toward faculty, and between students is not present in current counseling and counseling psychology literature. Three case studies are described that highlight the potential difficulties encountered when a training program fails to address the issue of respectful behaviors at all levels. Recommendations for training programs that will effectively encourage respectful behaviors include: developing a consensus on what constitutes respectful behavior between professionals and trainees; devising specific respectful behavioral guidelines for students and faculty alike; and devising outlines that clearly delineate the behaviors expected of students toward faculty, faculty toward each other, and students toward their peers. The "Michigan State University Counseling Psychology Program Position Statement on Diversity and Professional Conduct" is offered as a model plan which proposes that training programs can effectively encourage respectful behaviors at all levels by discussing, drafting, implementing, and enforcing similar plans. (Contains 16 references.) (GCP)

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Respect in the Training Relationship

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present the concept of 'respect' as a critical component in maintaining effective working alliances among members of Counseling and Counseling Psychology training environments. Current literature describes effective professional relationships with respect to dual relationships, faculty ethical behavior toward students and, professionals' ethical behavior toward clients. Literature addressing respectful behaviors between faculty; of students toward faculty; and between students is not present in current Counseling and Counseling Psychology literature. This paper explores these aspects of the literature and proposes respect as a necessary part of professional development. Case studies are presented and recommendations are discussed.

Respect in the Training Relationship

One important aspect of counseling and counselor training is professional development. One aspect of professional development is the professional relationship. This relationship is important as it assists psychologists, counselors, and counselor trainees in developing and practicing the necessary skills for use in their professional relationships with clients. The mental health profession recognizes this trend and created ethical guidelines for use in monitoring and regulating such relationships. The ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) and American Counseling Association (ACA), clearly indicate those areas of functioning in which psychologists, counselors, and counselor trainees should possess competence. Of particular import to the professional relationship are the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct Principle D and Ethical Standard 1.09 Respecting Others and the ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice sections C Professional Relationships; D Relationships with other Professionals, and F Teaching, Training, and Supervision. These areas primarily discuss the responsibility of *professional* counselors and psychologists to understand their responsibilities to respect their peers, colleagues, and clients. But what of the nonprofessional student trainee's ethical responsibilities? This area of the literature remains ignored or addressed passively, at best. Students are expected to adhere to the standards set for psychologists and professional counselors, yet there is no language that specifically addresses them as trainees. In addition, student trainees are offered courses in ethical behavior that provide them with the ethical codes of the mental health professions and that train them to understand these codes as they relate to their future work as mental health professionals. The problem with this approach is that student trainees' responsibilities at the training level are directly ignored, leaving students

unclear about what their junior level responsibilities are. One focus of this paper is to address that aspect of the student faculty relationship; namely student responsibilities to engage in ethical behaviors with the faculty that oversee their professional development. Further, other Counseling and Counseling Psychology training program professional relationships will be addressed including the concepts of 'RESPECTFUL' and 'DISRESPECTFUL" behaviors as a means of identifying the etiology and conceptualization of ineffective working alliances within training environments. In addition, current ethical guidelines pertinent to the discussion on respectful and disrespectful behaviors, and the framework typically used to discuss professional relationships in training environments will be discussed. Finally, case examples of disrespectful training environment behaviors and recommendations for addressing them will be presented.

Defining Respectful and Disrespectful Behaviors

The American Heritage Dictionary defines respect as, "to feel or show deferential regard for; esteem." Conversely, disrespect is defined as, "lack of respect, esteem or courteous regard (p.408). These concepts are central to the idea of counseling and counseling psychology and can serve as a guide for relationships among and between senior and junior members of the profession. In fact, these two definitions provide an essential framework for identifying the etiology and conceptualization of effective and ineffective working alliances within training environments. Given these definitions of respect and disrespect, we will turn to the manifestations of these terms in interpersonal behavior. The ethical guidelines of the profession are articulate, though vague, in their explanation of the behaviors expected of junior and senior members of the profession. Forrest, Elman, and Gizara (1997) reviewed the ethical guidelines with respect to their use in identifying impaired trainees of psychology. Their thorough review

presents a comprehensive overview of the professional standards. Based on their findings, it is clear that within the fields of Counseling and Counseling Psychology, there is an articulation of what is expected with regard to *general* conduct and behavior within the profession yet no clear articulations exist with regard to *specific* guidelines for conduct. Rupert and Holmes' 1997 study of professional codes of ethics supports this assertion. The researchers concluded that, little or no specific guidelines are offered for students with regard to their behaviors toward faculty or faculty toward each other. Further, the researchers found that, "little guidance is provided by professional associations to their membership regarding faculty roles and relationships in regard to their students" (p. 6). So even with the APA and ACA's attempts to address ethical guidelines, basic issues of respect and disrespect within the relationships of the training environment remain neglected. As an example, note section 1 of the Ethical Standards of the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. Section 1 General Standards item 1.09 Respecting Others states, " In their work-related activities, psychologists respect the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own." (APA, 1992). Although highly relevant and quite important, this guideline does not specifically address what behaviors constitute a behavioral manifestation of respect for others' opinions. Such vague wording leaves much room for interpretation, which defeats the purpose for which this important rule was intended. For if we recognize that we live in a diverse society, we understand that there exists a diversity of opinions regarding what constitutes respectful behaviors. If the professional standards were more specific and more fully incorporated the concept of respectful behaviors in its wording, senior and junior level members of the profession might be better able to adhere to the guidelines, which could potentially curb incidents of disrespectful behavior.

Respectful and Disrespectful Behaviors Between Faculty and Students

Having defined respectful and disrespectful behaviors in the training environment allows us to direct attention to the manifestations of both types of behavior in actual training. Although all training environment interactions will be discussed throughout this paper, we will begin here with those that occur between students and faculty. Typically, faculty student professional relationships are discussed with regard to two primary areas of functioning, dual amorous or exploitative relationships and faculty supervision of students (Kitchener, 1992; Leatherman, 1996; Rupert and Holmes, 1997; Sherry, 1991; Keith-Spiegel, 1994). Further, when other topics regarding faculty student relationships are included in the discussion, they typically identify faculty responsibilities to not abuse student labor and to be effective role models and mentors (Kitchener, 1992). Rarely, if ever, is the topic of student responsibilities to be respectful of faculty discussed. Such may be the case for a number of reasons. First, it is possible that since faculty are regarded as possessing power over students, we in the field believe it imperative to educate faculty to not abuse that power (Kitchener, 1992). Second, it is possible that since there is an established hierarchy in faculty student relationships, we assume that students cannot negatively affect faculty members professionally. Third, it is possible that general consensus dictates that faculty are highly respected members of the society and as such, may not be subjected to overtly disrespectful behavior. Fourth, it is possible that because an overwhelming majority of faculty, except in recent years, are white men, students engage in a process called scanning, whereby they "scan" faculty to determine power differentials and subsequently direct appropriate behaviors toward those they perceive as being powerful (namely white men) while directing disrespectful behaviors toward those they see as less powerful (Steward, 1999).

Finally, it is possible that only a small number of faculty members have experienced disrespect from students, which would preclude an investigation of this topic due to its lack of relevance to a critical mass of senior level professionals.

These ideas leave us with one question, namely exactly what are student trainees' responsibilities in being respectful of faculty? As stated earlier, our present professional guidelines do not address student trainees' responsibilities unique to their status as trainees. As such, shouldn't trainees be bound by a set of standards just as are all others in the mental health professions? At present, most training programs provide trainees with guidelines for ethical behavior upon their admittance and arrival to a training program. Generally, these guidelines are modified versions of the professional guidelines of the two primary governing bodies of the counseling profession, the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Counseling Association (ACA). According to the ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice Section F: Teaching, Training, and Supervision,

> F.2. Counselor Education and Training Programs
> a. Orientation. Prior to admission, counselors orient prospective students to the counselor education or training program+s expectations, including but not limited to the following: (1) the type and level of skill acquisition required for successful completion of the training, (2) subject matter to be covered, (3) basis for evaluation, (4) training components that encourage self-growth or self-disclosure as part of the training process, (5) the type of supervision settings and requirements of the sites for required clinical field experiences, (6) student and supervisee evaluation and dismissal policies and procedures, and (7) up-to-date employment prospects for graduates.

At the researchers' institution, for example, students are informed that they are expected to behave in an ethical manner. Specifically, the Master's student program handbook states in the

section "Reasons for Dismissal from the Program" that, "The following are offered as examples of circumstances or performances that may be the basis for dismissal action: 6. Unethical practices and/or unprofessional conduct. 7. Cognitive, affective and/or behavioral impairments that obstruct the training process and/or threaten client welfare (p. 17)." These guidelines, though clearly articulated, still leave a great deal of room for interpretation and do not specifically address the behaviors required of students to demonstrate respect for their faculty. Again, the most relevant language we as professionals have for discussing this aspect of professional relationships is included in, the ACA Code of Ethics D.1. Relationships With Employers and Employees

> a. Role Definition. Counselors define and describe for their employers and employees the parameters and levels of their professional roles.
> b. Agreements. Counselors establish working agreements with supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates regarding counseling or clinical relationships, confidentiality, adherence to professional standards, distinction between public and private material, maintenance and dissemination of recorded information, work load, and accountability. Working agreements in each instance are specified and made known to those concerned.

So what are the possible results of not clearly articulating student responsibilities to be respectful of faculty? The following case example explores this idea.

A tenured professor serving in the capacity of training director for a large graduate counselor training program, offers an annual comprehensive seminar to train students in the proper means of obtaining practicum sites. At this training seminar, student trainees are referred to their program handbook which clearly delineates the process and provided with the following necessary components for securing a practicum site: timelines for completing the process, expectations for practicum work, suggested due dates for contacting and interviewing with potential sites, names of advanced graduate students who have previously completed the process and names and contact numbers for locating sites of interest. Further, the training director provides monthly reminders of the importance of securing a practicum site and regularly

scheduled follow up meetings to assist students in gaining clarity on practicum and program issues. Finally, 5 months after the initial training seminar, and subsequent information sessions, (during a regularly scheduled meeting with the student trainees) the student trainees begin to openly complain of the difficulties they are experiencing in obtaining training sites. They publicly berate the training director for not adequately preparing them to obtain practicum sites; inform her that she has done a poor job of disseminating information on this topic; and blame her for their inability to secure suitable sites.

The students in this scenario might have approached their frustrations in a much more respectful manner. First, these students might have accepted responsibility for reading program announcements. In addition, they might have attended information sessions where additional information was disseminated so that they might gain clarity on any questions. Second, had they adhered to the APA and ACA guidelines, they would have respected the difference of opinion between themselves and the program director and strategized with her to determine what steps they might take to remedy the problems they were experiencing. Third, they could have assumed responsibility for informing the program director of their difficulties as they arose rather than waiting to express their frustrations. This option would have allowed the students to more calmly discuss alternatives with the program director instead of engaging in disrespectful and unprofessional behavior. Had the ethical and programmatic guidelines been clear with regard to respectful behavior and conflict resolution, the students would have had specific criteria addressing how to behave respectfully, even though they come from a diversity of backgrounds and possess a diversity of ideas with regard to what constitutes respect.

It is imperative that we attend to the notions of respect and disrespect because it is likely

that if students engage in disrespectful behavior with faculty, they may engage in such behavior with clients. It seems that part of any professional relationship is the ability to "agree to disagree" without animosity or resentment on the part of all parties involved. If student trainees are not taught or encouraged to learn to resolve conflict, how can we expect that they will develop these skills in the therapeutic relationship? Given that an aspect of our responsibility as counseling trainers is to model appropriate behaviors for our student trainees, it should be student trainees' responsibility to reciprocate such behavior with faculty. Disrespect in the training relationship can be a source of distress or a time consuming distraction for faculty. Further, such behavior directed toward faculty by students undermines the faculty member's ability to exert proper authority in the context of the training relationship with all students. Such problematic behavior requires that the faculty member divert attention away from competent and respectful trainees in the interest of addressing the problematic behaviors of the disrespectful or "respect impaired" trainee.

Defining disrespectful behaviors among faculty

How is it possible that students in the mental health professions believe it appropriate to engage in disrespectful behaviors with their professors? There are a number of reasons that might explain this phenomenon. First, it is possible that the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of training programs at both the junior and senior levels provide ample opportunity for cultural misunderstandings to occur. Second, and more compelling, is that it is possible that students engage in parallel process by modeling the behavior that they observe among faculty members. Indeed, faculty members sometimes experience problems in being respectful toward each other (Knight & Auster, 1999; Wilson, 1997). Very little literature exists addressing this problem other

than that which discusses sexual harassment policies. (Rupert & Holmes, 1997). To explore this aspect of respectful and disrespectful behaviors, we will turn to a second case example.

2 faculty members agree to team teach a required course; one is a senior tenured associate professor and the other, a junior non-tenured assistant professor. They structure the class so that both are present for all class meetings. During the middle portion of the semester, the junior faculty member notices that the senior member is regularly behaving in one of two ways. Either, he sits at the back of the class in a drowsy or inattentive state or he covertly challenges his co-instructor by asking rhetorical questions and openly questioning her knowledge base and skill level in front of the students.

Again, it is imperative for departments to have well defined guidelines that guide faculty interactions. If such is not done, it is possible that training departments can become breeding grounds for, "resentment, professional jealousy and sniping about perks" (Wilson, 1997, p. A10). In the case presented above, it would have been extremely helpful for the two faculty members to discuss their perspectives on course content prior to the beginning of instruction. Secondly, a thorough and comprehensive faculty and departmental handbook demanding respect as an aspect of professionalism and delineating proper procedures for addressing conflict would have been especially helpful. With just rules in place, it is much easier to identify and address disrespect between colleagues, for if the rules are clear and enforced, there is a diminished opportunity for disrespect. An example of such a document exists at Michigan State University. This document was developed by one of the authors of this paper, Dr. Robbie J. Steward, and contains very clear guidelines for respecting diversity and the professional relationship. Such documents should be drafted and adopted in all of our Counseling and Counseling Psychology

training programs as a means of discouraging disrespectful behavior.

Disrespectful behaviors among students

The final aspect of disrespectful behavior that the authors would like to present involves disrespectful behavior among students. This is an area of concern to many that remains neglected in the literature and in our ethical guidelines. As stated earlier, students are not bound by any ethical guidelines or rules that specifically address them in their capacity as trainees. The following case example highlights the consequences of our vague rules and offers alternatives to dealing with this phenomenon.

In this case example, students are engaged in a class discussion on a sensitive multicultural issue. Over the course of the discussion, the students become embroiled in an argument over their opinions on the topic. Although, the students hold very strong and differing opinions on the topic, the instructor observes that the class members are very cordial and respectful of each other's opinions. One student in the group, however, turns to her fellow class members and begins to berate them and the instructor for their ignorance and tells them that she refuses to engage in further conversation with them because she is so appalled at their "obvious ignorance." Further, she directs angry comments to specific class members during a break in the class and challenges them to disagree with her. Finally, she physically and verbally threatens some class members and audibly whispers rude comments about others.

Obviously, this student lacks the maturity to remain in a training program, and she certainly should not be in a Counseling and Counseling Psychology training program exhibiting such behavior. However, because she has not actually harmed another student or caused enough distress to her classmates or faculty to warrant her dismissal, the faculty who oversee her are

powerless. Clearly, other means might have been taken by this student to voice her dissenting opinion, yet because her program has no specific rules governing conflict negotiation, the student is not bound to any rules. Further, the students with whom this student will continue to interact will suffer because they have no formal recourse for addressing the problem with her.

Discussion

The disrespectful behavior presented in the aforementioned cases is neither egregious nor singularly harmful, yet when viewed with a comprehensive lens, seem much more powerful. For what if all of these behaviors were occurring concurrently in one training program? What consequences might such chaos have for the faculty and students working toward Counseling and Counseling Psychology degrees? For if students and faculty are permitted to continually engage in such behavior over time without consequences, what safeguards do professionals and clients have to ensure that these senior and junior level professionals will learn the message that disrespectful behavior is not permissible? Each of these cases is probably not unique to the training sites in which they occurred. Indeed, it is quite probable that similar situations occur throughout training sites across the country. What is unfortunate is that the faculty, student trainees, and others, who engage in such behavior, are not well prepared to assume the responsibilities of mental health professionals. For if these faculty and student trainees are bound by the ethical guidelines of the Counseling and Counseling Psychology professions, and cannot adhere to those as members in training, then it would be unethical for us as colleagues and trainer educators to allow these impaired professional to teach and practice.

Recommendations

Given the aforementioned discussion then, what are we as both junior and senior level

mental health professionals to do? The authors propose a number of recommendations in addition to those mentioned with the case examples. First, it is imperative for the faculty of training programs to sit together and develop a consensus on what exactly constitutes respectful behaviors between and among professionals and trainees. Specifically, faculty must engage in discussions that will allow them to present their individual perspectives on the definition and behavioral manifestations of respectful behaviors. Given the call by both the APA and ACA to respect diversity, it is essential for all voices to be heard so that varied perspectives on respect can be presented. From these discussions, professionals can gather the necessary data that for use in devising specific respectful behavioral guidelines for students and faculty alike that will account for the range of culturally different interpretations of such behavior. Furthermore, faculty can devise outlines that clearly delineate the behaviors expected of students toward faculty, faculty toward each other, and students toward their peers. These guidelines can incorporate remediation steps for trainees and professionals either unwilling or unable to adhere to such guidelines. Contracts that specify the guidelines might also be incorporated into hiring and academic admissions procedures requiring junior and senior level professionals' signatures before commencing with training or employment. Behavioral guidelines of this nature have already been developed and voted into practice by some Counseling and Counseling Psychology training programs. As stated earlier, one of the authors, Dr. Robbie J. Steward (1995), devised such a plan for use at Michigan State University, called the "MSU Counseling Psychology Program Position Statement on Diversity and Professional Conduct." In this plan, behavioral guidelines are delineated to assist faculty and students alike in the proper means of addressing conflict within the training program. In fact, the wording of the document is specifically related

to delineating respectful behaviors and reads as follows, "Toward this end, the remainder of document will (a) discuss the nature of "cross-cultural collisions", (b) identify several guiding principles for appropriately engaging in these conversations, and (c) recommend some general strategies for preventing and remediating unhealthy/unproductive exchanges and encounters around issues of diversity" (Steward, 1995). The document provides behavioral steps in its section on "General Strategies for Negotiating Cross-Cultural Collisions". This section includes very specific ideas, like clearly identifying and being introspective about the affective response(s) that result from conflict; clearly identifying and thinking about the other parties' behaviors that served as a trigger for the affective response, and identifying and reviewing any prior contacts with the other party or parties involved in contributing to your affective response. These guidelines are very direct and clearly offer alternatives to junior and senior faculty such that they may avoid disrespectful interactions. The authors believe that training programs can effectively encourage respectful behaviors at all levels by discussing, drafting, implementing and enforcing similar plans.

Second, note the APA's (1999), the "Guidelines For Culturally-Competent Education And Training" which address the needs of an increasingly diverse client and training population. These guidelines offer some very concrete examples of how we as a profession can incorporate the topic of respectful and disrespectful behaviors into our rules and guidelines. Section 4 of the "culturally competent" guidelines address supervision, advising and teaching. Item 4.a states that, "senior faculty/counseling trainers shall, require that case conceptualizations include a cultural analysis at all levels of training for pre-practicum courses through pre-doctoral internship." This is a very clear example of the articulation of quite specific behaviors in which

counseling trainers should engage. We as members of both the APA and ACA might open discussions to devise similarly specific guidelines for respectful behaviors in the training relationship.

Third, we must empirically document the existence of respectful and disrespectful behaviors and study their causes as well as who is most affected by them. Future research may want to address the racial and gender specific variables that contribute to and/or detract from experiences with disrespectful behavior. As mentioned earlier, it is quite possible that the race and gender of a person offers cues to his or her colleagues, encouraging either respectful or disrespectful behaviors.

Finally, we must take personal responsibility to ensure that we as individuals in the Counseling and Counseling Psychology training profession behave in respectful manners with our peers, mentors, and colleagues.

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